

## TALKING POINTS FOR ACID RAIN INTERVIEW

### Effects of Acid Rain

During hearings in the last Congress, the Subcommittee was told that thousands of lakes were dying in the northeastern United States and Canada. Acid rain is also believed to decrease forest growth and farm productivity. This is having a severe impact on the lumber and agricultural industries. Acid rain is a disaster that is real and growing.

Acid rain may even pose a threat to human health, by increasing the concentration of poisonous heavy metals in drinking water supplies. And the same fine particles that cause acid rain--particles of sulfates and nitrates one millionth of a meter in diameter, so small they can pass into the deepest parts of the lung--have also been estimated to cause up to fifty thousand premature deaths per year in the eastern United States.

### Cause of Acid Rain

The cause of these problems is sulfur dioxide, largely from power plants; and nitrogen oxides, from power plants and from auto exhausts. The overwhelming majority of the scientific community including industry scientists agree on this. The only dispute is exactly how to go about devising the cure.

### Solutions

I have said over and over again that I believe Congress must adopt an acid rain control program in any reauthorization of the Act. It is difficult to characterize legislation that only allows this problem to worsen as a Clean Air Act.

Both the National Commission on Air Quality and the National Academy of Sciences have called for acid rain control programs. And both organizations agreed that the control of emissions of sulfur and nitrogen oxides from fossil fuels is necessary to halt this environmental destruction.

In the last Congress, acid rain was primarily considered a regional issue-- a problem in New England, some northeast states and Canada. The solution that we devised was a regional one, affecting only 31 states east of the Mississippi. Recent findings show that the effects are now spreading to the south, southeast, and many areas of the West including my own state of California. In December of last year, southern California was contaminated with an acid fog far more acidic than vinegar. It was enough to cause breathing problems and corrode buildings. Faced with this new evidence of the vulnerability of vast regions of the United States to acid rain, Congress may have to devise a more comprehensive solution.

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### Costs and Benefits

The cost to the United States of a control program which would reduce emissions by 10 million tons within ten years is about \$3 billion per year as an upper bound if the emissions reductions come solely from the electric utility sector. This is an average increase in utility rates of only about 2 percent. Actually a much lower cost is possible if the flexibility within the acid rain amendment is exercised.

Dollar figures can only start to estimate current damages. Even these are great--\$5 billion per year in the eastern United States according to the National Academy of Sciences. So clearly the benefits of a control program far exceed the costs.

### What is the Administration Doing to Combat Acid Rain?

The Reagan Administration is clearly dragging its feet. In the face of overwhelming scientific evidence calling for control, it continues to maintain that more studies are needed. The Administrator opposes strengthening the Clean Air Act to mandate controls and seeks to weaken controls in current law limiting sulfur emissions. In fact, the Reagan Administration has authorized increases in emissions which will only make the problem worse.

The Reagan Administration is also trying to bias the development of scientific information by appointing former utility consultants to the Acid Rain Precipitation Task Force, which directs the Federal governments research programs concerning acid rain..

### What are the Prospects for Acid Rain Legislation this Congress?

We will undertake more hearings to document the devastating environmental consequences occurring across the nation as a result of acid rain. Congress is prepared to grapple with this difficult problem, but the utilities, coal industry and the Reagan Administration are opposed to any control program. I take it as a very favorable sign that General Motors has called upon the utilities to accept acid rain controls. GM scientists have said what other scientists have been saying for some time -- the Midwest plays a significant role in acid rain formation over much of the eastern half of the country. If other industry groups are willing to accept an acid rain control program as well, it may be possible to quickly reauthorize the Clean Air Act this year.